

FREMONT CABLE ACCESS CONTRACT RENEWAL COMMITTEE  
JULY 24<sup>th</sup> MEETING

**Minutes Approved 08/21/2007**

Attendees:

Brande McClean- Chairman  
Peter Bearse  
Tom McGall  
Neal Janvrin  
Larry Morse  
Keith Stanton  
Jay Sommers- Comcast  
Kathy Bailey- The Rockingham News  
Taking notes: Linda Stanton

The meeting was called to order at 7:38PM

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mbr.Stanton made a motion to accept the minutes of the 7/10/07 meeting. Mbr. McGall seconded it. All voted in favor.

Mbr. Stanton made a motion to accept the minutes of the 7/17/07 meeting. Mbr. Janvrin seconded. All voted in favor.

Chair McClean stated that the 2002 Cable Study Committee notebook is available to anyone to bring home.

Chair- McClean asked if there were any comments on the 7/17<sup>th</sup> meeting with other Town Boards.

Mbr. Stanton said that he had some issues. Stanton said that there were several comments made about the survey that Comcast did. He felt that Comcast had done their job and that the Selectmen had not done theirs. A certified letter was delivered to the Town on April 1, 2005 telling the Selectmen that they must conduct an 'ascertainment proceeding' "within 6 months of April 1, 2005, which affords the residents/subscribers an opportunity to: A) identify the future cable-related needs of the Town and, B) review Comcast's performance under the current franchise agreement". That proceeding was never done. This can result in the loss of 'protections' that the Town has during negotiations under section 626 of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984. Stanton said that the Selectmen discussed holding a 'public input' meeting in the summer of 2006 (Selectmen's minutes March 16, 2006). That meeting was never held. Stanton said that during the meeting of July 17 it was discussed that no political advertising was allowed. He pointed out that in the Town Cable handbook (page 22) it says that Political Access

Programs of 30 minutes are allowed. Stanton gave the Committee members copies of a Sept. 15, 2006 letter from the Selectmen to him stating that the 'linking' of several recessed selectmen's meetings (3- Aug 24<sup>th</sup>, Aug 26<sup>th</sup> and Aug 29<sup>th</sup> 2006) would require him to tape all three to be able to play any of them. This problem was brought up at the 7/17/07 meeting as to how it would affect live broadcasting. Stanton also gave the Committee a copy of the March 20, 2003 "policy for tape playback" written by the selectmen. It referred to "the much talked about donated equipment (from Comcast) that was supposedly delivered to Ellis School". He also gave the Committee a copy of Selectmen's minutes of Oct. 25, 2006 where the Selectmen acknowledged that the equipment was here by saying; "That equipment is long gone". Stanton said that several Town and School Officials have said that they saw that equipment.

Committee members thanked Stanton for all the documents.

Mbr. McGall brought to the Committees attention that the negotiations need to be completed by 10/15/07. He said that the Selectmen do not want any tax money used for a Cable Access Station. Subscribers do not want to add 10 cents to their bills. We are caught between a rock and a hard place. Ten cents a month is only \$1.20 per year. McGall asked how much it costs to send out the FREMONT TOWN NEWSLETTER. Mbr. Stanton said it was almost \$6,000 per year.

Mbr. Bearse said that pricing and cost is important but it is hard to put a price on something that they do not know what it is. On the 17<sup>th</sup> there was discussion on survey options. Mbr. Janvrin said that the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> was for invited people but was not publicized. There was no one from the 'Public' just Board/Committee members. He wondered if that was from lack of want and how to motivate people. He said that a survey in the Newsletter (mailed to 1200 houses) might only get 200 responses.

Mbr. Morse said that responses in the high teens or 20% are typical.

Chair McClean asked if the frequency of tape broadcasting has increased. Mbr. Stanton said that it will as soon as the Comcast contractor gets back from vacation. Probably Aug 1.

Mbr. Janvrin asked if there was a way to put the notice of an upcoming survey on channel 22 when the Selectmen's meetings are broadcast. Mbr. Stanton said that the Selectmen do not allow that. Mbr. Bearse asked if something could be put on the School sign and the bulliten board at Town Hall. Bearse also asked if we need 2 surveys. Mbr. Stanton said that it is written in the law that the Town needs to hold an Ascertainment Proceeding. Jay Sommers said that he will check on that.

Mbr. Stanton asked if committee members might take their own personal survey. Mbr. Janvrin said that it would be too small and too hard to get beyond the cloud of relatives.

Chair McClean asked the Committee if they had looked at a draft of a letter she would like sent to the Carriage Towne News concerning the "rewriting" of a Cable Committee announcement in the Town newsletter. Mbr. McGall said that the Committee should think about it. Mbr. Morse made a motion to table it. Mbr. Janvrin seconded. Majority in favor.

Chair McClean asked if there was any new information from other Towns. Mbr. Stanton said that he had heard from Danville that there 'franchise fee' is 1%.

Mbr. Janvrin said that he has talked to Joe Denocon (spelling) of Epping. Epping has a budget and paid volunteers. Fee is \$2.07. three sites and no tax impact.

Sommers said that the way it proceeds in a lot of towns is that there is a 'business side' and the 'language side'. Once you know what the town wants- that's the easy part. Then schedule a public hearing. Then determine origination points. Send out the construction crew. Then come back with cost. Sommers said that he would "find a vendor of equipment and figure it for you".

Mbr. Stanton asked where the 2 cents per month (multiplied by 12 months per year, multiplied by 1200 customers, multiplied by 20 years) that we all pay has gone?

Sommers said that he will "get back to you on that".

Sommers said that no equipment will be donated/provided by Comcast. He said, "There is nothing that will cost you nothing". He said he will give you a cost spreadsheet, in a week or two.

Mbr. Stanton said that if the Town does not receive any equipment from Comcast at no cost, it could affect the length of the contract. New technology and emerging competitors would have an effect on how long the contract will be.

Mbr. McGall said there was one road still not wired by Comcast, Old Ridge Road. Sommers replied that he will look into that and Comcast will "split the costs" with the homeowners on that road. McGall also mentioned that Midnight Sun Dr and San Antonio Rd are connected to the Raymond exchange.

Mbr. Janvrin said that Treaty Court is in the Sandown area.

Mbr. Morse asked how old the system is and if it is in need of an upgrade. Morse asked about bonding, costs and insurance. Sommers had no definite answer.

Chair McClean asked if "senior management could approve equipment for no cost to the Town. No definite answer was given by Sommers.

Mbr. Morse asked about the specs. Of the system and was told it was 750 MHZ.

Mbr. Bearse asked if Town hall would get a feeder line. Mbr. Janvrin asked if there is a modulator. Mbr. Morse asked if there will be a "forward line" at Town Hall. Morse also said to keep "the drops" to a minimum.

Mbr. Stanton said that to put things in perspective- the Town did not want to pay \$400 for start-up of a Town cable Channel at this years Town Meeting.

Mbr. McGall said that during the discussion of that \$400 warrant article one citizen stood up and declared that, "Comcast will give you all that equipment for nothing. There is no need for the Town to pay a penny". McGall said that we should try to pick the brains of other Towns and asked if any towns use taxpayer money to run their channel.

Sommers said, "none do".

Chair McGall asked when the public hearing would be and that we need to advertise it. She asked if the 1<sup>st</sup> week in October or the last week in Sept. would be best.

By a majority vote, the public hearing was set for Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 7:00PM at the Safety Complex.

Member Bearse asked Sommers do you ask what we are leaving you with?

Sommers said, yes, a rough draft, equipment, and costs.

Motion to adjourn at 8:43PM by Stanton, seconded by McGall.

All in favor.

Submitted by:  
Linda Stanton